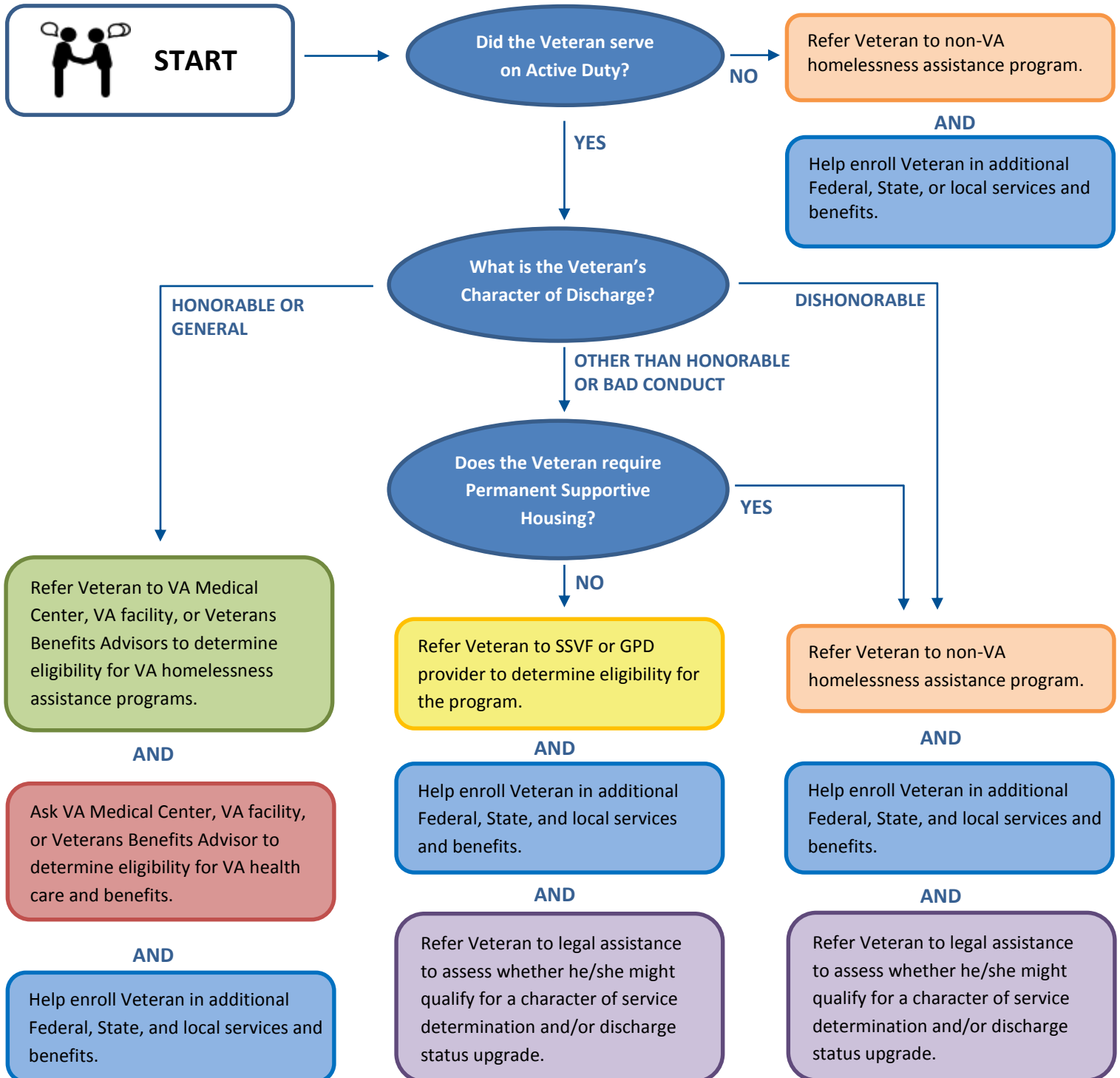




ASSISTING VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS THROUGH VA OR NON-VA PROGRAMS: A QUICK GUIDE



Match your action steps with the color-coded boxes on the following pages to find more details of each recommended action step and additional resources.

EXPLANATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

Refer Veteran to VA Medical Center, VA facility, or a Veteran Benefits Advisor to determine eligibility for VA homelessness assistance programs.

VA will verify his or her eligibility and enroll him or her in a targeted homelessness assistance program that most appropriately matches the Veteran's needs and desires.

VA programs verify eligibility by checking DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty. Veterans may be able to request their DD Form 214 by using the following website: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/>. Veterans experiencing homelessness may be able to expedite their application by writing "Expedite: Homeless Veteran" in the comments section of the application. Alternatively, to request a DD Form 214 application by mail, call the National Record Personnel Center at 314-801-0800.

Ask VA Medical Center or VA facility to determine if he/she is eligible for VA health care and benefits.

In referring a Veteran to VA programs, homelessness assistance programs should ask the VA facility to determine the Veteran's eligibility for VA health care and benefits.

The following guides offer information about enrollment in VA health care and benefits:

- [VA Health Benefits](#)
- [Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents, and Survivors](#)

Help enroll Veteran in additional Federal, State, or local services and benefits.

Regardless of eligibility for VA programs, a Veteran may also be eligible for additional Federal services and benefits, including [Medicaid](#), [SSI/SSDI](#), the [Food Stamp](#) (SNAP) program, the [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\)](#) program, [Housing Choice Voucher and/or Public Housing](#) programs, and the [Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program \(HVRP\)](#). The Veteran may also be eligible for additional State and local services and benefits. A homelessness assistance program should help enroll Veterans with the appropriate Federal, State, or local services and benefits.

Refer Veteran to SSVF or GPD provider to determine if he/she will be able to enroll in the program.

The Veteran may be served by the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) or Grant and Per Diem (GPD) programs. Refer the Veteran to a local [SSVF](#) or [GPD](#) provider to determine if he or she will be able to enroll in the program.

Refer Veteran to non-VA homelessness assistance program.

The Veteran can be referred to a non-VA homelessness assistance program that will quickly connect him or her to permanent housing and supportive services. Below is a list of potential Federal programs which may be able to assist the Veteran:

- [HUD's Continuum of Care program](#)
- [HHS's Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness \(PATH\)](#) programs,
- HHS's Health Care for the Homeless,
- State or locally-funded, or
- Privately-funded programs.

Refer Veteran to legal assistance to assess whether a Veteran might qualify for a character of service determination and/or discharge status upgrade.

Veterans who do not receive an honorable or general discharge may qualify for VA homelessness assistance programs depending on a character of service determination made by VA. More information on character of service determinations may be found on the following site:
http://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/character_of_discharge.asp.

Depending on the circumstances of their military discharge, Veterans may also consider applying to the Discharge Review Board for an upgrade of their discharge characterization. To receive a discharge upgrade, an individual must prove to the appropriate Discharge Review Board that his or her discharge reasons or characterization was "inequitable" or "improper."

More information about discharge status upgrades for each specific service may be found on the following sites:

- Army Discharge Review Board: <http://arba.army.pentagon.mil/abcmr-overview.cfm>
- Air Force Discharge Review Board:
<http://www.afpc.af.mil/afveteraninformation/airforcedischargereviewboard/>
- Naval Discharge Review Board (The Navy operates the board for both Navy personnel and members of the Marine Corps):
<http://www.public.navy.mil/asnmra/corb/NDRB/Pages/Naval%20Discharge%20Review%20Board.aspx>

If it appears a Veteran could benefit from a character of discharge determination or discharge status upgrade, homelessness assistance programs should consider referring the Veteran to an attorney who may be able to help explain the processes in more details, recommend a course of action, and provide representation. VA maintains a list of free legal clinics at:
<http://www.va.gov/ogc/docs/legalservices.pdf>.

ABOUT THE QUICK GUIDE

BACKGROUND

The national goal to end Veteran homelessness by 2015 encompasses **all** Veterans: individual Veterans and Veterans in families with children; Veterans who are experiencing chronic homelessness and those who have experienced homelessness only a short time; Veterans with every type of discharge, including Reserve and members of the Guard following discharge from periods of active duty; and those Veterans who are not eligible for VA benefits and services.

Depending on the Veteran's eligibility, needs, and interest, permanent housing and accompanying supportive services may be funded by VA's homeless assistance programs, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) homeless assistance programs, other Federal, state, community, or private programs.

This tool provides homelessness assistance organizations, shelter providers, and other community partners with a simple framework to help guide decisions regarding which set of programs may be the best fit, based on a quick assessment of their military service record.

USING THE TOOL

Beginning at the box marked 'START,' answer each of the tool's questions about a Veteran's military record, until you arrive at the color-coded recommended action steps. A fuller explanation of each action step, with additional resources, is found pages 2—3.

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

This tool should **not** be used to assess a Veteran's eligibility for programs definitively or to steer a Veteran to a particular intervention without consideration for his or her needs and preferences. **The only way to definitively determine a Veteran's eligibility for VA housing and service programs is to refer him or her to a VA Medical Center, another VA facility, or to a Veteran Benefits Advisor.**

There may be certain instances when a Veteran refuses to go to VA or VA providers have previously determined that he or she is not eligible for VA programs or services. In that case, the Veteran should be asked if they know the reasons for the eligibility determination. The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and the Grant and Per Diem (GPD) programs may be able to deliver services to those who are not eligible for other VA program and services. Furthermore, SSVF and GPD services are delivered by community-based organizations which may be preferred by some Veterans.

If not eligible or not interested in any VA homeless service, the Veteran should be referred to a non-VA homelessness assistance program. If a Veteran does not know the answer to the questions in the tool, a VA Medical Center, another VA facility, or a Veteran Benefits Advisor can determine eligibility for VA programs and services.